

Measure 5: Seattle Central Business District (CBD) Customer Surveys

Monitoring Objectives

- Formally assess downtown user perceptions, behavior and satisfaction levels before and during tunnel closure and after the tunnel reopens to transit use in order to assess the effectiveness of the mitigation measures sponsored by the interagency Monitor and Maintain (M & M) team.
- Collect informal feedback from downtown user after tunnel closure to better understand if the mitigation efforts are working well or poorly and to identify key areas for immediate improvement or fine-tuning.

Methodology

There are two survey instruments that are being employed to gauge the public reaction to tunnel closure.

The first instrument is a formal survey employing the services of a full service research consultant who will survey randomly selected cluster samples downtown of groups targeted for the survey. The type of information collected from bus riders is as follows: purpose of downtown travel; frequency of downtown travel and changes in that frequency; changes in using the bus to travel downtown; overall impression of downtown Seattle; and transit rider satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a number of factors such as travel time by bus through downtown, personal space when waiting at stops, time between buses, on-time performance of buses, location of stops predictability of bus arrivals and departures, and personal security waiting for buses when dark and during the day.

The type of information collected from drivers will include: purpose of downtown travel; frequency of downtown travel and changes in that frequency; changes in using a car to travel to downtown; overall impression of downtown Seattle; and driver satisfaction or dissatisfaction with travel time through downtown by car, convenience of routes through downtown by car, clarity of information (signage, rules) for drivers downtown, ability to park downtown, convenience of parking to destination, and cost of parking

Information from both drivers and transit users will be collected to learn about their general satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the following: being able to walk around downtown without feeling crowded; personal security when walking around downtown; adequacy/clarity of information given to downtown users about the tunnel project; things that are working well and working poorly; performance of those responsible for helping ease disruptions; and recommendations for needed changes or adjustments. Approximately 1,000 downtown users will be surveyed with each formal survey. The survey itself will require 10 – 15 minutes to complete.

A formal “before” survey was conducted in spring 2005. The results of this “before” survey were reported in the Volume 1 Baseline Report that was issued in September 2005. Readers are referred to Volume 1: Baseline Conditions for the complete discussion of this “before” survey. However, one of the main conclusions for this survey was that the respondents generally had a positive impression of the downtown, that they did not feel crowded when moving around downtown and that they were satisfied with their personal security and safety.

These results will be updated with two more formal surveys. The data collection for the first update was conducted during tunnel closure in the summer 2006 and the results of this survey will be available in December, 2006. A third and final survey will be conducted after the tunnel reopens to transit travel in the fall of 2007.

The second instrument that has been used to gauge public opinion about tunnel closure are smaller intercept surveys using sample of approximately 200 to 300 downtown users. These intercept surveys provide some qualitative feedback on what downtown constituents are feeling about tunnel closure. Given

the difference in methodology and sample size, it should be emphasized that the results of the quick feedback survey cannot be compared with the results of the more formal customer surveys of downtown users described above. They should be viewed as providing information that is similar to the type of information that can be gotten from small focus groups.

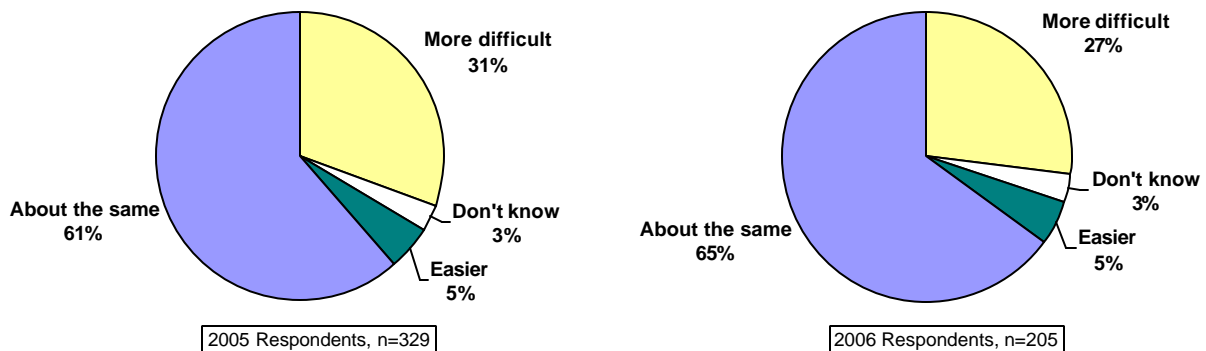
Summary Observations—Informal Intercept Survey, Spring 2006

Results from the spring 2006 quick feedback survey were consistent with results from fall 2005. Except as noted below, patterns were the same. The majority of respondents who participated in the 2006 survey felt it was not more difficult to get to downtown, that their buses were on time and that the convenience of their bus stop locations has not changed. However, a sizable minority of respondents continue to feel these travel elements had gotten worse since the tunnel closed. Respondents were evenly divided on whether it now takes more time to get through downtown and whether downtown is more crowded than before the tunnel closure.

Ease of Traveling to Downtown

Most respondents (65%) think getting to downtown is about the same as it was before the tunnel closed. Just over one in four respondents (27%) said getting downtown is more difficult than it used to be (Figure 1). This is a small change from 2005 when a little over 61 % of respondents felt that travel to downtown before and after tunnel closure was about the same, and 31% felt it was more difficult.

Figure 7. Ease of traveling to downtown



Why Travel to Downtown is More Difficult

Respondents who said travel to downtown is more difficult than in the past were asked what makes it more difficult. The most commonly mentioned response was that traffic is worse (40%) followed by slower buses (33%) and too many buses on surface streets (16%). Although the percentage of respondents who feel this way about these elements is less than in 2005, traffic congestion and time continues rate high among respondents as reasons given for difficulty with traveling to downtown. Elements that were rated worse by respondents in 2006 were Too many buses on surface streets (16%); where buses go and where stops are (13%); and hard to drive/navigate in downtown (11%). Table 10 provides a listing of all responses in descending order of mention.

Table 10. Reasons Why Travel to Downtown is More Difficult

Respondents who said it is more difficult to travel to downtown Seattle

Q: In what way is it (getting to downtown) more difficult?

	2005 (n=102)	2006 (n=53)
Traffic is worse	51	40
Bus is slower/Trips take longer	49	33
Buses not on schedule	16	2
Stops have been moved/removed	14	11
Hard to drive/navigate in downtown	4	11
Too many buses on surface streets	3	16
Because tunnel is closed (general)	3	2
Where buses go and where stops are is confusing	2	13
Tunnel was more convenient		7
More people on street		4
Other	7	4
Don't know	1	

Downtown Locations Where Vehicle Traffic is Difficult

Bus riders who said it takes longer to get through downtown since the tunnel closed were asked to identify the locations where vehicle traffic is the most difficult. Responses were tallied based on the number of times each street was mentioned. The streets most commonly mentioned as problem areas were: Third Avenue, Fourth Avenue, Second Avenue, Pike Street and Stewart Street. The only notable change from 2005 results is that fewer respondents (17% vs. 23%) noted Stewart Street as a street where traffic is difficult. A complete list of street names in descending order of mention is shown in Table 11.

Table 11. Downtown Locations Where Vehicle Traffic is Difficult

Bus riders who said travel time through downtown is worse than before tunnel closure			
Street Name (Base)	Total (76)	Street Name (Base)	Total (76)
3 rd Avenue	38	6 th Avenue	4
4 th Avenue	25	Pioneer Square	3
2 nd Avenue	22	Jefferson	3
Pike	17	Cherry	3
Stewart	17	Royal Brougham	3
University	13	Chinatown/International District	3
Jackson	13	Denny	1
Pine	12	Eastlake	1
Seneca	8	Westlake	1
5 th Avenue	7	11 th	1
Union	7	Spring	1
Virginia	7	Marion	1
Columbia	7	1 st Avenue	1
James	5	Harvard	1
Howell	5	Fairview	1
9 th Avenue	5	Downtown (general)	1
Madison	4	Pike Place Market	1
7 th Avenue	4	Spokane	1
Safeco Field	4	Other	12
Olive Way	4	Don't know	3
Getting on/off freeway	4		
Question 16B: At what locations does the vehicle traffic seem to be the most difficult?			
Multiple responses accepted.			

Tunnel Closure Information

Nearly eight in ten respondents (78%) recalled seeing or hearing information about the tunnel closure after September 24, 2005. Respondents who have seen information about the tunnel closure since the tunnel closed in September most commonly mentioned seeing tunnel signage (44%)—especially signs at the bus tunnel (36%)—or getting information from a transit agency (22%).

In contrast to before the tunnel closed, just 12% said they heard about the tunnel closure from a major media source after September 24, 2005.

Table 12. Sources of Information about Tunnel Closure

Q: *Where did you see that information (before tunnel closed)?*

Q: *Since September 24, where have you seen information about the tunnel closure?*

	Before Tunnel Closure (n=307)	Since Sept. 2005 (n=267)	Spring 2006 (n=205)
Major Media (Net)	41%	19%	12%
Newspaper articles	25	11	9
TV news	20	9	6
Radio	6	1	<1
Tunnel Signage (Net)	39%	48%	44%
Signs at bus tunnel	23	29	36
Signs posted on downtown streets	17	21	9
Transit Agency (Net)	39%	45%	22%
Signs at bus stops	13	23	12
Transit agency brochures	9	8	2
Posters/signs on the bus	9	7	6
Rider alerts	9	8	<1
Bus or transit agency websites	4	5	3
Timetables	1	2	<1
Rider information call centers	<1	1	2
(Metro) reps handing out information			2
Word of Mouth	16%	9%	3%
At Work	14%	4%	2%
Other (Net)	7%	10%	4%
Email	3	1	-
Regular mail	2	2	2
Non-transit websites	2	2	-
Public events	<1	1	-
Police activity/people getting tickets	0	3	
Other	1	1	2

How Informative Was the Information Received

Respondents who reported seeing information about the tunnel closure after September 24, 2005 were asked to rate the information they received. As Figure 6 shows, over half of the respondents (56%) found the information *very informative* and an additional 38% said it was *somewhat informative*. Although there was a decrease in the number of respondents who found tunnel information *very informative* in 2006, the majority continue to feel the information they received is at least informative.

Respondents who received information from a transit website or transit brochures were the most likely to say the information they received was *very informative* (80% each).

Figure 8. How Informative was the Information Received?

Respondents Who Saw Information about the Tunnel Closure after 9/24/05

Q: How would you rate the level of information you received? Would you say it was very informative, somewhat informative, or not informative?

